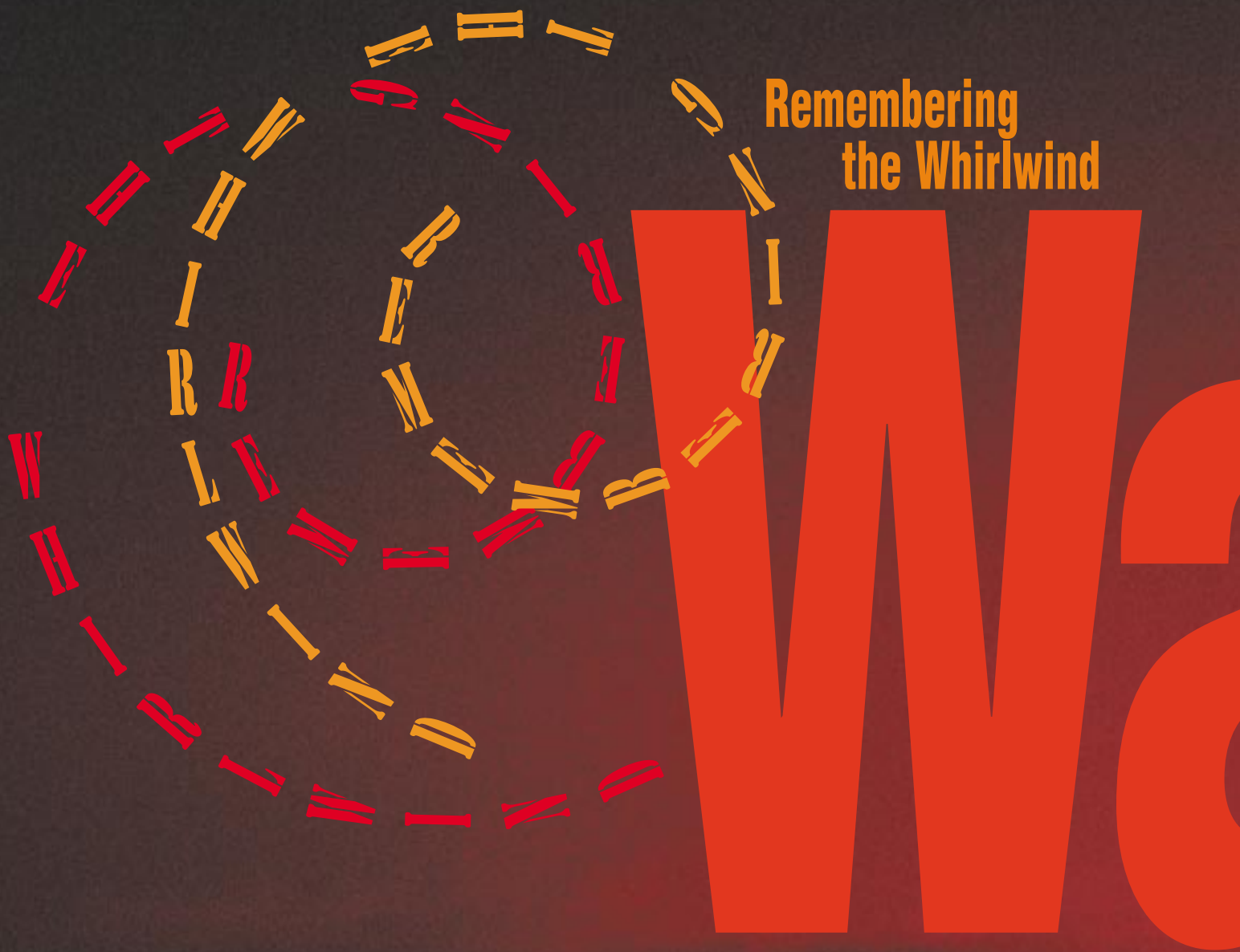


Soldiers Online

Remembering the Whirlwind



An AH-64A Apache of the 101st Airborne Division is prepped for a mission early in Operation Desert Shield. On Jan. 17, 1991, nine of the division's Apaches fired the first shots of the air-war phase of Operation Desert Storm.



The Apache also played a major role in the ground-war phase of Desert Storm, using its cannon and Hellfire missiles to good effect against enemy armored vehicles, troops and bunkers.

Story by Heike Hasenauer

air

AT 11 p.m. Saudi time on Jan. 16, 1991, nine Apache helicopters and one Black Hawk of the 101st Airborne Division joined a squadron of Air Force special operations helicopters and flew into western Iraq.

At 3 a.m. on Jan. 17, the Apaches launched Hellfire missiles at two Iraqi early-warning radar stations, destroying them. Then, some 100 Air Force jets soared overhead, en route to their bombing mission against Baghdad, Iraq's capital.

The air-war phase of Operation Desert Storm had begun.

Meanwhile, GEN H. Norman Schwarzkopf Jr., commander of U.S. and allied forces in the Middle East theater, penned a letter to his wife and children, sealed it, and told his aide to mail it. Then, according to his autobiography, "It Doesn't Take a Hero," he wrote a short note to his troops.

"Soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines of United States Central Command: This morning at 0300 we launched Operation Desert Storm, an offensive campaign that will enforce United Nations resolutions that Iraq must cease its rape and pillage of its weaker neighbor and withdraw its forces from Kuwait.

"The president, the Congress, the American people and indeed the world stand united in their support for your actions. You are a member of the most powerful force our country, in coalition with our allies, has ever assembled in a single theater to face such an aggressor. You have trained hard for this battle and you are ready. My confidence in you is total. Our cause is just! Now you must be the thunder and lightning of Desert Storm. May God be with you, your loved ones at home, and our country."

The Iraqis retaliated against Saudi Arabia and Israel with Scud surface-to-surface missiles, a weapon that coalition commanders considered militarily negligible because it failed to hit military targets.

By Jan. 25 the Iraqis had fired 20 Scuds at Israel and 24 at allied bases and cities in Saudi Arabia, according to records at the U.S. Army Center of Military History in Washington, D.C.

U.S. Patriot air-defense missile units had launched 60 Patriots to defend coalition military facilities, population centers and industrial sites in Saudi Arabia and Israel; the antimissile system had just been modified by its manufacturer when Desert Storm appeared imminent, said CMH chief BG John Sloan Brown.

MAJ Martin Poffenberger, who works in the International Military Affairs Section at Headquarters, Third Army, at Fort McPherson, Ga., was a captain in the Fort Bragg, N.C.-based 4th Psychological Operations Group during the war.

"We were stationed in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, with GEN Schwarzkopf's Central Command headquarters," he said.

Poffenberger's unit developed the leaflets that the Air Force dropped over Iraqi troops, encouraging them to surrender.

"When we realized the Patriot missiles were hitting the Scuds that Saddam launched against Riyadh, we felt comfortable going up



Whirlwind War



Troops dismount from a Bradley fighting vehicle during the intense training period that preceded the launch of the ground war. The coalition forces' tough and realistic training emphasized mobility, coordination and firepower.

on the rooftops and watching the light show," Poffenberger said. "It was like watching shooting stars."

After weeks of continuous air attacks on targets in Iraq and Kuwait, and with no indication that Saddam intended to pull his forces out of Kuwait, President George Bush gave Schwarzkopf the go-ahead to launch the largest ground offensive since the Korean War.

On "G-Day," Feb. 24, coalition forces were poised along a front that stretched from the Persian Gulf westward, 300 miles into the desert, said retired GEN Frederick Franks Jr., then a lieutenant general and commander of VII Corps.

Early intelligence reports indicated coalition forces would be outnumbered two-to-one by deeply dug-in Iraqi troops. But Schwarzkopf's tactical plan of deception left a gaping hole in the Iraqi defenses.

He concentrated the initial buildup of troops and attacks along the Saudi border with Kuwait, tricking the Iraqis into thinking the main allied thrust

would come in a valley some 100 miles away, along the Iraq-Kuwait border. To further confuse Saddam's forces, the 1st Cav. Div. moved into position near Kuwait (it later joined VII Corps armored units).

Because the coalition air attacks had virtually eliminated Iraqi intelligence capability, other U.S. forces were able to complete a last-minute undetected "hook" movement to the west.

At 4 a.m. on Feb. 24, 1991, intelligence reports from the Kuwaiti resistance arrived at the war room in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. "The destruction of Kuwait City by the Iraqis has begun," one report said. Explosions had been reported throughout the city. And the Iraqis had ignited hundreds of oil wells throughout Kuwait.

In darkness, the first marines crossed into Kuwait, with M60 tanks and Cobra helicopters in the lead, Schwarzkopf said. They were followed by thousands of troops in armored personnel carriers and Humvees.

Meanwhile, two brigades of Saudi armor and a brigade of troops from other Gulf countries crossed the border and headed north on the coast road

toward Kuwait City.

Nearly 300 miles to the west, the armored cars of the French 6th Light Armored Div. rumbled across 30 miles of desert into Iraq. With a brigade of paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Div., they seized the Al Salman air base, Schwarzkopf said.

Thirty miles away, the 101st Abn. Div. prepared to launch a helicopter assault as the 24th Inf. Div. mounted an armored assault into Iraq.

With its more than 300 Apaches, Black Hawks, Cobras, Iroquois and Chinooks, the 101st Abn. Div. prepared to transport an entire brigade — with its equipment and tons of fuel and ammunition — 50 miles into Iraq. By the third day of the ground war, the 101st was 150 miles from Baghdad and had established a huge firebase that allowed attack helicopters to easily strike targets in the Euphrates valley, Schwarzkopf said.

The coalition forces had caught Saddam's forces completely off-guard.

"Our primary force of heavy tanks — more than 1,500 of them — was waiting at the Saudi border," Schwarzkopf said. The force had three missions: the pan-Arab corps of Egyptians, Syrians, Saudis, Kuwaitis and other Arabs was to free Kuwait City; the U.S. VII Corps was to destroy the Republican Guard; and the U.S. XVIII Abn. Corps would prevent the Iraqis from escaping through the Euphrates valley.

The 2nd Armd. Cav. Regiment led VII Corps into Iraq after successfully breaching a minefield. The 3rd Armd. Div. and 1st Inf. Div. followed,

delivering finishing blows to the Republican Guard's Tawakalna Div. And the 1st Armd. Div. "just moved right around the enemy," Schwarzkopf said.

The force of some 620,000 soldiers, marines and airmen advanced against an Iraqi force of approximately 540,000 men. The coalition forces advanced into Iraq and Kuwait largely unchallenged, in what Schwarzkopf called "a textbook operation." It stormed 45 miles into Iraq on the first day, exceeding his most optimistic expectations.

"I often reflect on the war," Schwarzkopf said. "My greatest memory is of the end of the first day of the ground war, when LTG Gary Luck, the XVIII Abn. Corps commander, gave me a status report. 'We've accomplished all of our objectives for the day and for day two,'" he said.

"Then I asked about casualties," Schwarzkopf said. "We had one wounded in action, and had captured over 3,000 prisoners. Across the theater, collectively, we had eight dead and 27 wounded, and had taken more than 13,000 prisoners." Luck's initial report was "the first signal that we were going to score a huge victory," Schwarzkopf added.

"Everyone who was there in the desert remembers the incredible blazing lights from the main gun rounds," said retired COL Gregory Fontenot, then commander of the 1st Inf. Div.'s 2nd Bn., 34th Armor. "I don't remember hearing any noise at all, just seeing the enemy tanks on fire and breathing in the acrid odor of ammunition propellant. There was almost a strobe-light effect from the

coupling of smoke, the oil-well fires and the moon.

"I missed the Vietnam War," said Fontenot, now a U.S. government contractor with a Kansas-based company that provides training support and develops doctrine for the Army. "One of my worst fears was always that I'd never have a chance to experience combat until I was in charge of a lot of soldiers. My worst fear came true."

Fontenot remembers being afraid. "It wasn't like when you just escape a head-on collision. It was more an unrelenting dread that something terrible would happen to my unit," he said.

A lack of combat experience wasn't unusual for Desert Storm troops, Fontenot said. At the brigade-command level, many commanders were Vietnam veterans, but of the 10 maneuver commanders assigned to Fontenot's division, only two had served in Vietnam. And only two soldiers in his battalion were war veterans.

"We were, however, all veterans of the National Training Center. And we were very well prepared for combat," said Fontenot.

On Feb. 26 and 27, VII Corps divisions bored into the Republican Guard forces. An awesome panorama of armored and mechanized equipment spanned the desert as far as the eye could see, said Brown, then a lieutenant colonel commanding the 2nd Bn., 66th Armor.

A Winning Coalition

THE VII Corps, under LTG Frederick Franks Jr., was deployed to the right of XVIII Airborne Corps and consisted of the 1st Infantry Division, 1st and 3rd Armored divisions, the British 1st Armd. Div., the U.S. 2nd Armd. Cav. Regiment and the U.S. 11th Aviation Brigade.

The XVIII Abn. Corps, under LTG Gary E. Luck, held the left, or western, flank with the 82nd and 101st Abn. divisions, 24th Inf. Div., French 6th Light Armd. Div., U.S. 3rd Armd. Cav. Regt., and the U.S. 12th and 18th Avn. brigades.

The U.S. 1st Cav. Div., in reserve, stood ready to enter action with VII Corps as the war ended, after performing covering duties during the days leading up to the assault.

The two corps covered about two-thirds of the front, with three commands holding the eastern one-third, said BG John Sloan Brown, chief of the U.S. Army Center of Military History. The commands were Joint Forces Command North, made up of formations from Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia; Marine Central Command, with LTG Walter E. Boomer's 1st Marine Expeditionary Force — which included the 1st Bde. of the Army's 2nd Armd. Div. and the 1st and 2nd Marine divisions; and Joint Forces Command East, which consisted of units from all six member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council. — *Heike Hasenauer*



Smoke from oil wells blown up by retreating Iraqi forces looms above a battle-damaged apartment building in Kuwait. The Iraqis deliberately damaged many structures throughout the tiny nation they had sought to conquer.



The coalition force included 1,500 tanks, 1,500 Bradleys and other armored personnel carriers, 650 artillery pieces and hundreds of supply vehicles, Franks said in author Tom Clancy's book "Into the Storm."

They "rolled east through Iraqi positions, as inexorable as a lava flow," according to historians' accounts of the war in the CMH-published book, "The Whirlwind War."

Brown's unit "ran into the Iraqis in

the middle of the night on Feb. 27," he said. "My battalion was attached to the 1st Inf. Div. that breached the mine fields to the west of the Wadi al Batin," a long, straight depression that formed the western border of Kuwait. "We were among the first units to advance through the breach and reach the Kuwait-to-Basra Highway," Brown said.

Lead elements of the 1st Inf. Div. earlier breached Iraqi defenses, Brown said. The lead tanks, equipped with mine plows that could unearth the mines and push them aside, cleared and marked lanes, each wide enough for a tank.

Other tanks, equipped with rollers, followed the plows to detonate any mines the plows missed, said Brown. "As we passed through at least a dozen lanes, all you could see was armor, all moving at the same time. And 14 battalions of artillery were firing.

"Our divisional objective was 'Norfolk,'" Brown continued. "That's where the Republican Guard forces were centered. Coalition forces engaged the RG in the western end of Kuwait and the eastern end of Iraq."

Different units had different names for the objective. VII Corps called it "Phase Line Smash," Brown said. The 2nd ACR knew it as "73 Easting."

After the war, it was commonly referred to as "The Highway of Death."

On Feb. 26 and 27 Task Force 2-34 — which included companies A and D of the 5th Bn., 16th Inf., and companies B and C of 2nd Bn., 34th Armor — pursued Iraqi units through miles of desert, joining other American and British units in the Battle of Norfolk.

"It was easily the largest tank battle in the history of war," Brown said. "At no time in World War II were there as many tanks involved in a single battle."

"There were no second chances for the Iraqis as our tanks fired against their T72s and T55s," said Fontenot. "Their tanks exploded immediately into tremendous orange plasma flames.

"Two U.S. soldiers were killed and four wounded in the task force," Fontenot continued. "That was sufficiently horrible enough to last me the rest of my life."

After only 100 hours, some lives would forever be altered. But the war was over, and the Allied coalition had scored a great victory.

CMH records indicate the coalition forces, collectively, destroyed "3,847 of Iraqi's 4,280 tanks, over half of its 2,880 armored personnel carriers, and nearly all of its 3,100 artillery pieces." And "only five to seven of Iraq's 43 combat divisions remained capable of offensive operations. Additionally, the coalition forces had taken an estimated 60,000 prisoners."

By comparison, the best Iraqi divisions destroyed seven M1A1 tanks, 15 Bradleys, two APCs and one Apache helicopter, according to CMH reports.



Smoke from the hundreds of Kuwaiti oil wells and storage tanks destroyed by the retreating Iraqis blackened the skies, and pooling oil caused widespread damage to the fragile desert environment.

Defense Department officials announced on March 17 that the first troops, those from the Fort Stewart, Ga.,-based 24th Inf. Div., would redeploy home.

The 100-hour ground war had been the culmination of the fastest overseas deployment of U.S. troops ever — more than a half-million of them. The deployment of troops and equipment had been Schwarzkopf's greatest challenge, he said.

"The Middle East was very far from America, and we had nothing in Saudi Arabia. We had to build up a large quantity of fuel and ammunition, and find a way to house and feed the soldiers. It was a gigantic logistical challenge," Schwarzkopf said.

Retired MSG Greg Mason, now a senior environmental engineer with Third Army, was with the 101st Ordnance Bn., a 2nd Corps Support Command unit out of Germany during Desert Storm.

"We set up two ammunition corps-support activities, each about two miles long by one mile wide," Mason said. "I'd never done anything of that magnitude. It's not something you'll ever see in a field manual. According to doctrine, the ammo area accommodates up to 25,000 short tons. At the height of the Desert Storm buildup, we stored 65,000 tons. And we had 130 trailers per day rolling forward for the 1st Inf. Div. alone."

Numerous other benchmarks characterized Desert Storm and were to have a long-term impact on the "greatest army in the world," Defense Department officials said [*see accompanying stories*]. □

Kuwait — After the Storm

ALONG Kuwait's Dead Goat Road acres of destroyed Iraqi vehicles lie in a graveyard of sorts, as a solemn reminder of war's destruction.

The fate of the vehicles' crews is not known, but the mass of burned, twisted metal attests to the fact that the Iraqis lost the battle. During four long days in February 1991, U.S.-led coalition ground forces demonstrated that tyrants might live, but they won't prosper.

Since the end of the Gulf War, Third U.S. Army has deployed combat forces to the Middle East six times in response to Iraqi aggression.

Today, they're deployed in Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, and include a coalition-joint task force in Kuwait.



Damaged and abandoned Iraqi vehicles line the "Highway of Death." Fleeing Iraqi units were located, targeted and destroyed by relays of coalition attack aircraft.

and largest prepositioned-equipment stock facility in Qatar. "Prepositioning equipment in the Gulf allows for a much more rapid deployment of troops to the area," said COL Kathleen Dennis, former commander of Army Materiel Command, Southwest Asia.

Many things have changed in Kuwait over the past 10 years, but Third Army's commitment to the region has not, said COL David W. Lamm, commander of ARCENT-Kuwait, which exercises command and control and force protection over assigned and attached U.S. Army forces in Kuwait.

ARCENT-KU also supports the CJTF in the reception, staging and onward movement and integration of personnel.

Once the task force has its equipment, it moves to its training area, known as the Kabal, to begin a four-month rotation and take advantage of the Kuwaiti desert to perform realistic training.

The combined-arms live-five exercise integrates mechanized infantry, armor, artillery, engineer and other supporting units to simulate battle scenarios.

"We're here to demonstrate our commitment to the defense of Kuwait and ensure that coalition forces continue to work together and are prepared to defend Kuwait," said LTG Paul T. Mikolashek, commander of Third U.S. Army and U.S. Army Forces Central Command.

Other units also support the mission in Kuwait. An aviation task force rotates in every six months to provide air support to all military operations and transport high-ranking officials. An explosive ordnance team clears training areas of devices left behind by Iraqi forces, and civilian security personnel safeguard convoys and provide law enforcement.

Before coalition forces battered Saddam Hussein's forces in 1991, President George Bush said: "We are drawing a line in the sand." That line has become a fortress within which coalition forces and civilians are working together to ensure Kuwait's boundaries are not violated, and that the people within its boundaries remain safe. — SPC Chad Jones, 11th Public Affairs Detachment

In its role as U.S. Army Forces Central Command, or ARCENT, Third Army is the Army component to U.S. Central Command. Its area of responsibility includes 25 countries in the Middle East and Southwest and Central Asia.

To better prepare its forward commands for future contingencies, ARCENT recently introduced the Army's newest



Story by Heike Hasenauer

Lessons of the Storm



GEN H. Norman Schwarzkopf Jr. (sitting, far left) and Saudi Arabia's LTG Prince Khalid (sitting to Schwarzkopf's left) meet with Iraqi commanders during surrender talks.

tency," Atkinson wrote.

Coalition forces had been spared Iraqi president Saddam Hussein's threat to annihilate them with chemical weapons. And military health officials, who had anticipated countless cases of infectious diseases, were similarly relieved.

"By the beginning of the offensive campaign, we had more than 20,000 hospital beds available in-country and many thousands more available in Germany and the United States for use by our troops if needed," said retired GEN H. Norman Schwarzkopf Jr., wartime commander of allied forces in the Gulf.

In the end, nonbattle injuries and infectious diseases were lower than in any previous war involving U.S. military personnel, according to officials at the Naval Medical Research Institute in Bethesda, Md.

On another level, the war validated U.S. military equipment capabilities and the training and readiness of its forces, said COL Michael Hiemstra, director of the Center of Army Lessons Learned at Fort Leavenworth, Kan.

The Air Force won acclaim for eliminating targets and battering Iraqi troops before the ground war.

And the performance of America's "cutting edge" technologies — from the F-117 "Stealth" fighter, Patriot missile system, M1A1 Abrams tank, Bradley fighting vehicle and AH-64 Apache helicopter, to night-vision and electro-optic devices — "demonstrated that the investment in those systems was the right decision,"

THE ground war in the Middle East ended with a cease-fire at 12:01 a.m. Eastern time on Feb. 28, 1991.

It had lasted less than 100 hours. But numerous landmark events occurred during the war that changed the Army and the way America views its men and women in uniform.

Despite the separations and the weeks of anguish experienced by families at home, America and her allies let out a great sigh of relief — relative to the number of troops and tons of equipment in the combat theater, the 98 U.S. soldiers killed in action represented a surprisingly small loss, said BG John Sloan Brown, chief of the U.S. Army Center of Military History. The Army also reported 105 noncombat deaths.

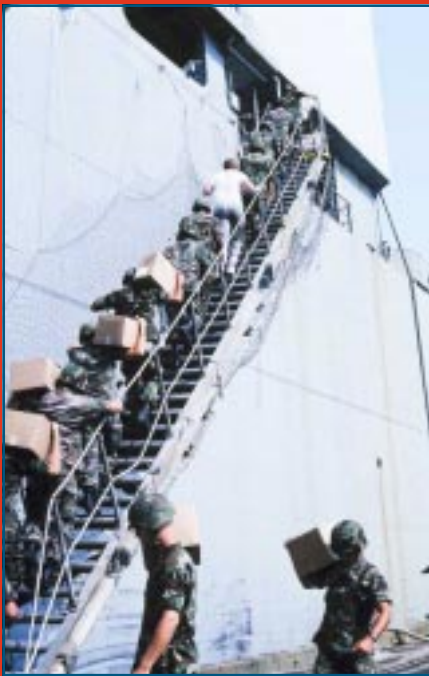
Washington Post staff writer Rick Atkinson wrote in a September 2000 article: "Of the [nation's] 10 major



Officials were prepared for many U.S. casualties, and were relieved at the relatively small numbers of dead and wounded.

wars, this one was the cheapest in blood ... Not since the Spanish-American War, and perhaps never in U.S. history, has the United States waged such a relentlessly successful military campaign.

"The American military, 20 years in the rebuilding after the searing debacle of Vietnam, displayed competence, valor and extraordinary po-



Soldiers board a Saudi Arabia-bound ship. The Desert Shield buildup exceeded the numbers deployed to Vietnam.

Hiemstra said.

Between August 1990 and March 1991 the United States deployed 697,000 troops to the Persian Gulf for the six-week war with Iraq. The buildup of military might exceeded the numbers deployed to Vietnam and was completed in months.

"There's no question that Desert Shield and Desert Storm were a deployment wake-up call," said CALL senior Combat Training Center analyst Rick Bogdan. "The fact that we had six months to deploy so many troops and so much materiel will

probably not happen again," but the fact that it happened caused the Army to rethink its positioning of stocks.

Prepositioning equipment afloat took on a new urgency after the war, as America realized it could be called to any part of the world to fight or keep the peace, Bogdan said. The latter realization led to the current emphasis on Army transition, to create a lighter, faster, more capable force.

Desert Storm "was also the best exercise of our plans for Reserve and National Guard mobilization for combat," said Lon Seglie, CALL's deputy for lessons learned.

At the start of the air-war phase of Desert Storm, President George Bush authorized the call-up of 1 million reserve-component soldiers for up to two years. In August, he had authorized the first call-up of selected Reservists for 90 days. He later extended the call-ups to 180 days. Eventually, more reserve-component soldiers were part of the U.S. force in the Gulf War than in any other war, historians said.

"We found out soon after we moved the Guard and Reserve through mobilization points that there were tremendous differences between how the Army's personnel-management system worked for active-duty and reserve-component soldiers," Seglie said. "In a number of cases the families of Army Reserve and National Guard soldiers weren't paid in a timely manner. The Army has made major advances toward correcting the pay process."

In the tactical arena, emphasis has been placed on improving soldiers' ability to identify friend or foe, to minimize "fratricide" in combat, said CALL spokesman LTC Marv Decker.

The M1A2 tank, as an example, has been fitted with a system to improve crewmembers' situational awareness.

On the home front, the war rallied Americans in a common cause, igniting feelings of patriotism and support for the military that hadn't been demonstrated in America in more than a half-century, Brown said.

Across America, and at U.S. military installations overseas, communities set up support and information centers to help families at home cope. Pentagon public affairs staffers manned a Desert Storm hotline to answer queries from anxious and fearful families and loved ones.

Restaurants gave free food to military support groups, and businesses everywhere contacted service representatives to see what they could send to the Gulf, or to military installations in the rear, to help out.

Earlier, during Operation Desert Shield, the build-up phase for the war, businesses shipped everything from reading materials and sports equipment to stuffed animals and sweets. And thousands — including school children and grandparents — wrote letters addressed to "any service member," to boost morale and let soldiers know "America is behind you all the way."

At the same time, Desert Storm gave America national military heroes: besides Schwarzkopf, they included then-chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff GEN Colin Powell and then-Secretary of Defense Richard B. Cheney.

But the war wasn't without its negative side. The years immediately following Desert Storm saw debate over a number of issues, among them women in combat, Reserve readiness, downsizing the Army and "Gulf War Syndrome."

In response to the issue of women in combat, in October 1994 Defense Secretary Les Aspin rescinded the "risk rule" barring women from combat units and certain high-risk support units. That move opened an additional 7,000 jobs — among them more aviation positions — to active-duty female soldiers, plus 1,000 in the Army Reserve and 10,000 in the National Guard. □



GEN Colin Powell was chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the war, and GEN H. Norman Schwarzkopf led U.S. Central Command.



The nation rejoiced when Desert Storm ended. Events like the jubilant ticker-tape parade in New York City welcomed the troops home.